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Evaluation of the Functioning System of the Social and Solidarity Economy in Slovakia

Gabriela Dubcová, Denisa Gajdová, Katarina Grančičová*

University of Economics in Bratislava, Dolnozemska cesta 1/b, 852 35 Bratislava, Slovakia

Abstract

International scientific project: “Social & Solidarity Economy (SSE) as Development Approach for Sustainability in EYD 2015” (Europe Aid/134863/C/ACT/MULTI, Grant Contract: DCI-NSAED/2014/352-248). The University of Economics in Bratislava – the responsible institution for research focused on SSE in Slovakia. Applied research design: hypothesis and aim, object, methodology. Specification of determining conditions for efficient SSE activities. Analysis and description of the role of the SSE entities. Evaluation of the attributes of supportive public policy for the SSE activities. Identification and recognition of all possible SSE entities from official public open registers. Confrontation of this selected databases with websites of each concrete SSE entity. Mapping the relevant SSE entities in the SR. Selection of the best relevant representatives of SSE entities. Segmentation of the best relevant representatives of SSE entities according to the adequate quadrant of the Power Map of the evaluated entities. Elaboration of the questionnaire for the research of functioning selected SSE entities in Slovakia. Completion and evaluation of questionnaires. Comparison of the obtained information with involved stakeholders according to their direct experiences. Evaluation and selection of the best practice list for relevant representatives of SSE entities (TOP1+TOP2→TOP6). Conclusions and recommendations for science, theory, legislation and practice.

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Keywords: Social and solidarity economy, System of the Social and Solidarity Economy Social and solidarity entities, Social and solidarity activities

* Gabriela Dubcová. Tel.: +421-2-6729-5576; fax: +421-2-6729-5570.

E-mail address: gabriela.dubcova@euba.sk

1. Introduction

Endeavour in institutionalising corporate social responsibility and principles of the social and solidarity economy done by the world organisations such as UN, OECD, or ILO, supported also by European Commission – EUROPE 2020 Strategy (EC, 2010), are activities of the SSE entities successful in “stone” countries of the EU. We can identify more complicated situation with stagnating/frozen SSE activities in post socialist countries, including Slovak Republic. That is why we focus on specification of the situation in institutionalising SSE principles into daily reality of economic entities in Slovakia. The SSE is very easily described as a new form of organization of economic life, from local to global. It is an ethical, reciprocal and cooperative way of consuming, manufacturing, financing, substituting, communicating, educating, and expanding that develops a new way of thinking and living. Renowned experts with intensive interest in topics of social and solidarity economy: Davidson, C. (Department of Economics, Michigan State University); Mattheai, J. (Department of Economics, Wellesley College Wellesley, Massachusetts); Utting, P. (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development); Ikemoto, Y. (Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia); Allard, J. (U.S. Solidarity Economy Network); Arruda, M. (PACS Brazil); Miller, E. (Grassroots Economic Organizing); Reintjes, C. (REAS – Network for Alternative and Solidarity Economy, Spain); Verma, M. (Association for Women’s Rights in Development), etc.

2. Research Process

The research of SSE activities in Slovak economic entities was based on application of three-dimensional perspective logic of the research process:

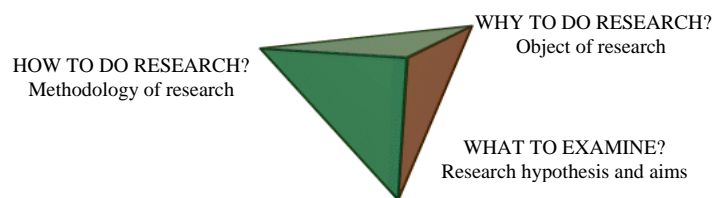


Fig. 1. Three-Dimensional Perspective of the Research Process

2.1. Research Hypothesis and Aims

A. The hypothesis

Our goal is to verify the hypothesis that all types of economic entities have been involved into the institutionalization processes of the SSE and this process is integrating for economics of Slovakia.

B. Basic research aim

The primary research aim is to diagnose the present situation in institutionalizing the SSE in Slovakia and present detection and recommendation to improve and strengthen the position SSE entities in the SR.

C. Partial research goals

In order to accomplish the basic aim, it was relevant to achieve an objective performance of the partial objectives:

- To define how the SSE concept is perceived,
- To dedicate the extent of determining conditions for efficient SSE activities,
- To describe a role of the SSE entities and the attributes of supportive public policy for the SSE activities,
- To identify and classify of the best relevant representatives of SSE entities,
- To evaluate and present the best practice of SSE entities (inc. stakeholders),
- To present detection and recommendation to improve and strengthen the position SSE entities in the SR,
- To provide integrated and aggregated results of our research to international project team for common elaboration of research results for the EU.

D. Object of the research

A solidarity economy process has to be supported, driven and led by various solidarity economy entities. The process has to be embedded in relations of solidarity. Not all of these actors will be solidarity economy entities that institutionalise the vision, values and principles of the solidarity economy. Instead many of these entities will have characteristics (visions, values and even principles) and behaviours that encourage them to orientate around and support the solidarity economy process and movement building process.

2.2. Methodology of the Research

A. Methods

Considering the complexity of the problem regarding the research of the SSE activities in Slovakia, such a combination of methods was applied which was appropriate to accomplish the exacting goal (due to saving of space, only the outline is stated here):

Table 1. Applied Methods for Research Purposes

General methods	Specific methods
A/ Logical methods	▪ brainstorming and synectics
▪ analysis – synthesis	▪ benchmarking
▪ induction – deduction	▪ questionnaire
▪ abstraction – concretization	▪ structured interview
	▪ direct and indirect diagnostics (via indicators)
B/ Empirical methods	▪ mathematical methods
▪ observation	▪ statistical methods
▪ measurement	▪ graphical methods
▪ experiment	▪ simulation
	▪ application of information and communication technologies
	Synergy (interaction)

B. Procedures

The research is carried out on the grounds of project aim as part of the international scientific project (by in cooperation with national project leader Slovak Centre for Communication and Development) “Social & Solidarity Economy as Development Approach for Sustainability in EYD 2015” (Europe Aid/134863/C/ACT/MULTI, Grant Contract: DCI-NSAED/2014/352-248).

- The first phase was carried out next scientific-research procedures: a) dedication of determining conditions for efficient SSE activities → b) analyse and description of the role of the SSE entities → c) specification the attributes of supportive public policy for the SSE activities → d) presentation of the detection and recommendation to improve and strengthen the position SSE entities in the SR → e) providing of integrated and aggregated results of our research to international project team for common elaboration of research results for the EU.
- The second phase is focused on the next scientific-research procedures: a) identification of all possible SSE entities from official public open registers (business register, trade register, register of civil associations, register of protected manufactory, register of self-governing regions, cities and municipalities, register of NPOs,...) → b) confrontation of this selected databases with websites of each concrete SSE entity → c) creation of the power map of the best relevant representatives of SSE entities → d) elaboration of the questionnaire for the research of functioning concrete SSE entities in Slovakia → e) completion of questionnaires (via meeting, Skype, call, email) → f) comparison of this obtained information with involved stakeholders according to their direct experiences → g) evaluation and selection of the best relevant representatives of SSE entities.

3. Research Results

3.1. Description of the Social and Economic Situation in Slovakia

Whereas each topic focused on evaluation of SSE entities requires an erudite detailed analysis of the determining conditions next part of our research is dedicated to general overview to set the framework of the mapping SSE activities.

A. SSE context

The Slovak Republic (SR) is the member country of the Eurozone and regional association of V4 countries. Slovakia shows the continual dynamic growth of its economics. The Slovak economy has been built on social-market principles and its relatively high growth of performance assures a positive impact on the labour market with continuous growth of total employment in the Slovak economy although the country is in the last transformation phase from the traditional (industrial) model into the sustainable (new) model. For the SR the stabilized democracy with corruption complications and middle level of cooperation between government and other actors (NGO, trade unions...) are characteristic.

B. Important indicators of the economic and social development

For more understandable description of the existing economic, demographic, sociological and other important determined relations I'm presenting related indicators (from credible state and international institutions: Slovak National Bank, Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Eurostat, World Bank, UNO – with newest data of last possible published year):

- Geography indicators: population: 5,421,349 inhabitants (31/12/2014); area – 49,035 km²; capital – Bratislava
- Political characteristics: state organization – parliamentary republic; creation of the independent Slovak Republic – the 1st January 1993; integration into the European Union – the 1st May 2004
- Demography indicators (2014):
 - Proportion: women 51.26% and men 48.74%
 - Population structure by age: from 0 to 14: 15.31%; from 15 to 64: 70.73%; above 65: 13.96%
 - Ethnical structure: Slovaks 81.1%, Hungarians 8.4%, Roma 2.0%, Czechs 0.7%, Rusyns 0.6%, others 7.2%
 - Religious structure: 62.0% Roman Catholics, 8.9% Protestants, 3.8% Greek Catholics, 0.9% Orthodox, 13.4% atheists and 10.6% did not answer the question about their belief (2011)
- GDPs:
 - Measured by volume growth generated GDP – showed Slovak economy in 2014, an annual growth of 2.4% (at constant prices). In comparison with 2013, Slovak economy accelerated its dynamics by 1 percentage point.
 - For the whole year 2014, the GDP – produced in the volume of 75.215 billion. EUR. In comparison with the year 2013 in current prices, an increase of 2.2%.
- Macroeconomical indicators:
 - Industrial production index (annual percentage changes): 3.7% (2014); 5.2% (2013)
 - Balance of foreign trade: 3,348,2 EUR million; 3,381,9 EUR million
 - Total sales of sectors (annual percentage changes): 2.2% (2014); 2.4% (2013)
 - Consumption expenditures (2013, <http://slovak.statistics.sk/>, 9th September 2015):

Table 2. Consumption Expenditures

(in EUR per month and person)	Households in total	Households of employees	Households of self-employers	Households of pensioners	Households of others
Gross money expenditure, total	371,86	402,49	340, 00	359,46	251,00
Foodstuffs and non-alcoholic beverages	73,90	70,12	70,34	95,40	59,06
Alcoholic beverages, tobacco	9,49	9,43	10,09	9,81	8,05
Clothing and footwear	16,14	17,56	18,08	12,89	10,12
Housing, energy expenditures	64,28	59,47	54,58	92,06	53,97

- Annual HICP inflation rate (year-on-year change in %): -0,1% (2014); 1,4% (2013) → deflationary development
- Debt ratio (general government gross debt as % of GDP) 54.1% (2014); 54.6% (2013)
- Rate of registered unemployment: 13.2 % (2014); 14.2% (2013)
- Employment ESA 2010 (year-on-year change in %): 1.4% (2014); -0.8% (2013)
- Employed by the labour force: a) number of employed: 2,363,0 th. persons; b) share of employed in labour force: 86.8 % and c) index (the same period of the last year = 100): 101.4
- Social and Economic Situation in the Territory
 - Administrative division of the SR – created with 8 regions and 79 districts (<http://slovak.statistics.sk/>, 29th August 2015):

Name of the Region	Administ. seat	Population (2014)
Bratislava Region	Bratislava	625,167
Trnava Region	Trnava	558,677
Trenčín Region	Trenčín	591,233
Nitra Region	Nitra	684,922
Žilina Region	Žilina	690,449
Banská Bystrica Region	Banská Bystrica	655,359
Prešov Region	Prešov	819,977
Košice Region	Košice	795,565



Fig. 2. Social and Solidarity Entities

- The Slovak Republic is a small country and administrative division has been implemented in order to better manage regions according to the territorial specificities, but differences between regions are marginal.
- Regional indicators (<http://slovak.statistics.sk/>, 29th August 2015):

Table 3 Regional Indicators

Region	Average Monthly (nominal) Wages (in €per person)	Social Protection (in €per person)		Gross Domestic Product (in €per person)	% of the Employed Population	% Population with Education	
		Expenditures	Revenues			SS	HEI
Data Origin – Year	2014	2012		2014	2014	2011	
Bratislava Region	1 107	3 946	3 492	33 260	63,7	29,8	28,4
Trnava Region	772	2 715	1 235	14 791	62,1	27,3	13,0
Trenčín Region	779	2 892	1 231	11 929	57,6	29,7	13,9
Nitra Region	705	2 805	968	11 919	58,5	27,5	13,4
Žilina Region	750	2 714	1 205	11 663	58,1	28,0	14,4
Banská Bystrica Region	730	2 870	1 040	9 885	60,2	28,7	13,9
Prešov Region	657	2 418	771	8 098	58,9	26,4	12,8
Košice Region	775	2 749	1 010	10 629	56,9	27,9	14,5

- On the basis of these economic and social indicators – the western regions are more developed and richer than the eastern regions.
- It is important to evaluate – the relative differences between regions are no longer significant when compared to the most European countries having territorial differences.

C. Partial evaluation of the determining conditions

The above mentioned indicators present thorough overview of the social and economic situation in the Slovak Republic:

- The Slovak economy achieves permanently relatively high growth of performance with a positive impact on the labour market, enterprise innovations and social area;
- The population of the country lives above the average standard of living with a high cost of living;
- State expenditures on education, research and development financing, health care, social protection and environment have a long-term lower level, but with high rate of efficiency;
- The Slovak Republic is built on social-market principles and stabilized democracy.

The objective evaluation of these characteristics in the area of politics, economics, social, education, research and development and environment generates quality knowledge of basis for existence and functioning of subjects of the social and solidarity economy in the Slovak Republic.

3.2. Description of the Social and Solidarity Economy Organizations' Role

On the basis of the existing social and economic situation in the Slovak Republic:

- The SSE supports practices of social and economic relations that permanently provide survival and improve quality of life of thousands of people not only in Slovakia but in different parts of the world;
- The SSE assigns to the production of stuffs and services through large number of organizations and enterprises that have explicit social environmental goals, and are directed by cooperation principles and practices, solidarity, ethics, and democratic self-management.
- The SSE practices – based on relations of collaboration with others inspired by cultural values that place the human being as a subject and purpose of economic activity rather than the private accumulation of wealth in general and capital in particular;
- Despite this diversity of origin and cultural dynamics the most visible trends of the SSE processes/movement are: a) the social value of human labour, b) values of cooperation and solidarity, c) food security and smallholder empowerment, d) universal health coverage, e) local economic development, f) full satisfaction of the needs of

all as the axis of technological creativity and economic activity, g) women's well-being and empowerment, h) the transition from informal economy to decent work, i) greening the economy and society, j) the search for a respectful exchange relationship with nature, k) sustainable cities and human settlements, l) transformative finance.

- Variable forms of the SSE – include, first of all, trade unions, cooperatives and other forms of social enterprise, self-help groups, community-based organizations, associations of informal economy workers, service-provisioning NGOs, solidarity finance schemes, among others.
- At present, in the Slovak Republic it is important:
 - To recognize the role of the SSE enterprises and organizations in sustainable development;
 - To promote knowledge of the SSE and consolidate the SSE networks; and
 - To establish an enabling legal, institutional and policy environment for variable forms of the SSE entities.

3.3. Mapping the Relevant SSE Entities in the Slovak Republic

In the next comprehensive review we present the identification and classification of the best relevant representatives of SSE entities in the Slovak Republic in two pillars parts: a) representatives of local and national authorities and b) representatives of enterprises/organisations/institutions/ in the SSE:

Table 4. The Best Relevant Representatives of SSE Entities

I. Representatives of local and national authorities:	
1)	Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic (Ministerstvo dopravy, výstavby a regionálneho rozvoja Slovenskej republiky) with internal responsible organisational units
2)	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic (Ministerstvo pôdohospodárstva a rozvoja vidieka Slovenskej republiky) with internal responsible organisational units
3)	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny Slovenskej republiky) with internal responsible organisational units
4)	Slovak Trade Inspection (Slovenská obchodná inšpekcia)
5)	Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (Slovenská agentúra pre rozvoj investícií a obchodu)
6)	Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic (Úrad verejného zdravotníctva Slovenskej republiky)
7)	Fund to Support the Arts (Fond na podporu umenia)
8)	Community of Banská Štiavnica (Mesto Banská Štiavnica)
9)	Community of Bardejov (Mesto Bardejov)
10)	Community of Košice (Mesto Košice)
II. Representatives of enterprises/organisations/institutions/ in the SSE:	
11)	College of Health and Social Work of St. Elizabeth (Vysoká škola zdravotníctva a sociálnej práce sv. Alžbety) – academy
12)	Primary Boarding School for Blind and Visually Impaired Children In Levoča – education
13)	Hockey school of Zdeno Cíger (Hokejová škola Zdena Cígera) – education
14)	OKRASA, Production Co-operative – protected manufactory (production and sale of decorations, jewellery and clothing)
15)	IN VIVO – business (manufacture and sale of decorative and utilitarian objects made of ceramics), SME
16)	Institute of Christ the High Priest, Žákovec (Inštitút Krista Veľkňaza, Žákovec) Community-based organization, Christian cooperation
17)	VIA IURIS – legal advice, profession associations
18)	Slovak Chamber of Auditors (Slovenská komora audítorov) – advisory, profession associations
19)	Automotive Industry Association (Zväz automobilového priemyslu) – profession associations
20)	KOVO Trade Union (Odborový zväz KOVO) – labour area, associations of workers
21)	The Trade Union of Workers in Education and Science of
26)	Návrat – NPO supports the return of abandoned children from orphanages to families
27)	Ichtys – civic association is working with children and youth aged 6-26 years in leisure activities
28)	GRANTEK – protected manufactory with production of electrical equipment
29)	PDCS – business (providing professional training), SME
30)	OSRAM Slovakia – protected manufactory with production of electric lamps
31)	Slatinka, Zvolen – civic association with the topic of environmental activities
32)	PPD Liptovská Teplička – business (agriculture production), SME
33)	Pre mesto – civic association focused on the support to function and improve the town of Poprad
34)	Nadácia na záchranu kaštieľa Senné – foundation focused on the renovation of mansion
35)	Penzión Vesna – business (accommodation services),
36)	Bratislavský okrásľovaci spolok – civic association with the

	Slovakia (Odborový zväz pracovníkov školstva a vedy na Slovensku – labour area, associations of workers)		topic of preserve historical values of Bratislava's city
22)	Nádej – Association of Multiple Sclerosis Hope (Združenie sclerosis multiplex Nádej) – civic association with the topic of health care	37)	Hevhetia – business (The Slovak record label), SME
23)	PLAMIENOK n.o.– NPO with the topic of health care	38)	Nadácia na záchranu kaštieľa Senné – foundation focused on the renovation of mansion
24)	The Volunteer Centre, Banská Bystrica (Centrum dobrovoľníctva, Banská Bystrica) – civil society	39)	Accenture Slovakia – business (ICT and advisory services) large company
25)	Slovak Board of Parents' Associations (Slovenská rada rodičovských združení) – civil society	40)	Embraco Slovakia – business (Production of compressors to cooling systems) large company

Next step presents the power map of the best relevant representatives of SSE entities in the form of segmentation of these mentioned relevant representatives of SSE entities according to the adequate quadrant of The Power Map of the Evaluated Entities:

A [high profile & low power] 15), 18), 21), 22), 35), 36), 39), 40)	B [high profile & high power] 1), 2), 3), 4), 6), 8), 10), 11), 12), 13), 16), 17), 23), 26), 27), 28), 30), 31), 32), 33)
C [low profile & low power]	D [low profile & high power] 5), 7), 9), 14), 19), 20), 24), 25), 29), 37), 34), 38)

Fig. 3. The Power Map of the Best Relevant Representatives

3.4. The SSE Good Practice

The selection of the best SSE entities (TOP 6) we carried out on the basis of the following scientific-research processes:

- Elaboration of the questionnaire for the research of functioning concrete SSE entities in Slovakia,
- Completion (via meeting, skype, call, email) and evaluation of questionnaires,
- Comparison of this obtained information with involved stakeholders according to their direct experiences,
- Evaluation and selection of the best relevant representatives of SSE entities (TOP 1 + TOP 2 → TOP 6).

THE BEST SSE ENTITIES (TOP 1 + TOP 2 → TOP 6)				
TOP	Name	Logo	Location	Website References
			Sector	
1	LYRA CHOCOLATE, s.r.o.		Nitra district in Nitra Self-governing Region	http://en.lyrachocolate.com/
			Manufacture and sale of chocolate products	
2	NÁVRAT, o. z.		Bratislava district in Bratislava Self-governing Region	http://www.navrat.sk/
			Supports the return of abandoned children from orphanages to families	
3	OKRASA, výrobné družstvo		Čadca district in Žilina Self-governing Region	www.okrasa.sk
			Glass production	
4	VIA IURIS, o.z.		Pezinok district in Bratislava Self-governing Region	www.viaiuris.sk/
			Legal advice	
5	Inštitút Krista Veľkňaza, Žákovec		Village Žákovec, Kežmarok district in Prešov Self-governing Region	www.itv.sk
			Services of social care	
6	Nadácia na záchranu kaštieľa Senné		Village Senné in Košice Self-governing Region	www.oazy.sk/historia/2012/nadacia-zachrany-a-obnovy-senianskeho-kaštiela
			Reconstruction of historical monuments	

Fig. 4. The Best SSE Entities

4. Discussion

4.1. Conclusion

- Missing commercial enterprises in structure of the best SSE entities as a real expression of minimal interest in SSE activities,
- Variable types of SSE entities substitute and compensate the absented coordinated system of the SSE in the SR,
- The biggest barrier for economics of SSE entities of all types – missing financial and economical tools to help and facilitate activities of the SSE entities,
- High degree of creativity and flexibility in financial sourcing of SSE entities (public sources, foundations, % taxes, international and national grants, gifts of individuals and legal persons).
- Selection of the TOP 1: LYRA CHOCOLATE – private company with manufacture and sale of chocolate products,
- Selection of the TOP 2 → TOP 6 of SSE entities:
 - NÁVRAT, civic association (NÁVRAT, občianske združenie),
 - OKRASA, production co-operative (OKRASA, výrobné družstvo),
 - VIA IURIS, civic association (VIA IURIS, občianske združenie),
 - Institute of Christ the High Priest, Žákovec (Inštitút Krista Veľkňaza, Žákovec),

- Foundation for Rescue of the Senné Mansion (Nadácia na záchranu kaštieľa Senné).

4.2. Recommendations

- To pass national strategies (with resolution of the National Council) to promote the social and solidarity economy in the SR;
- To apply the agreed realization model of the SSE policy: the national SSE strategy → to adopt related laws → to apply a stimulating system of financial and economical tools → to implement a system of public authorities to coordinate the SSE activities;
- To codify a stimulating system of financial and economical instruments (with adequate adaption of related laws): e.g. specialized system of the state supports, support grant schemes, tax breaks, tax deductions, etc.;
- To arrange consultation centers for existing, new and potential SSE entities with goals to enhance and improve the system and networking of SSE entities;
- To start courses focused on the SSE activities for public and students as part of the education system of the SR;
- To inform, popularize, eventually organize special awards and workshops for operating SSE entities (to motivate population, profit- and non-profit organizations to perform the SSE activities practically in daily life);
- To create a supporting network of mutual cooperation in professions' association, associations of workers, trade unions and customers' associations to improve SSE activities and mutual cooperation of partner entities;
- To initialize and apply efficient marketing tools for mass acceptance of the SEE activities by the public in the SR: e.g. the national award, workshops, exhibitions and presentations (and other visualization forms) of the best practices of the SSE, communication centre for SSE activities, etc.

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